



# Business Rates

Explanatory Notes

2023-2024



## Non-Domestic Rates

Non-Domestic Rates, or business rates, collected by local authorities are the way that those who occupy non-domestic property contribute towards the cost of local services. Under the business rates retention arrangements introduced from 1st April 2013, authorities keep a proportion of the business rates paid locally. The money, together with revenue from council taxpayers, locally generated income and grants from central government, is used to pay for the services in your area.

Further information about the business rates system, may be obtained at:

[www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates) and at [www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates](http://www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates).

## Business Rates Instalments

Payment of business rate bills is automatically set on a 10-monthly cycle. However, the Government has put in place regulations that allow ratepayers to pay over 12 monthly instalments. If you wish to take up this offer, you should contact us as soon as possible.

## National Non-Domestic Rating Multiplier

Durham County Council works out the business rates bill for a property by multiplying the rateable value of the property by the appropriate non-domestic multiplier. There are two multipliers: the standard non-domestic rating multiplier and the small business non-domestic rating multiplier. The Government sets the multipliers for each financial year, except in the City of London where special arrangements apply.

Ratepayers who occupy a property with a rateable value which does not exceed £50,999 (and who are neither entitled to certain other mandatory relief[s] nor liable for unoccupied property rates) will have their bills calculated using the lower small business non-domestic rating multiplier, rather than the standard non-domestic rating multiplier.

Both multipliers for a financial year are based on the previous year's multiplier adjusted to reflect the Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation figure for the September prior to the billing year, unless a lower multiplier is set by the Government. The current multipliers are shown on the front of your bill.

## Rateable Value

Apart from properties that are exempt from business rates, each non-domestic property has a rateable value which is set by the Valuation Office Agency (VOA), an agency of His Majesty's Revenue and Customs. They compile and maintain a full list of all rateable values, available at [www.gov.uk/voa](http://www.gov.uk/voa). The rateable value of your property is shown on the front of your bill. This broadly represents the yearly rent the property could have been let for on the open market on a particular date specified in legislation. For the current rating list, this date was set as 1st April 2021.

The Valuation Office Agency may alter the valuation if circumstances change. The ratepayer (and certain others who have an interest in the property) can also check and challenge the valuation shown in the list if they believe it is wrong.

Further information about the grounds on which challenges may be made and the process for doing so can be found on the VOA website: [www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-check-your-rateable-value-is-correct](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-check-your-rateable-value-is-correct).

# Revaluations

All non-domestic property rateable values are reassessed at revaluations. The most recent revaluation took effect from 1st April 2023. Revaluations ensure that business rates bills are up-to-date, more accurately reflect current rental values and relative changes in rents. Frequent revaluations ensure the system continues to be responsive to changing economic conditions.

## Business Rate Reliefs

Depending on individual circumstances, a ratepayer may be eligible for a rate relief (i.e. a reduction in their business rates bill). There are a range of available reliefs. Further details are provided below and at [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates), and on our website [www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates](http://www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates).

## Temporary Reliefs

Some of the permanent reliefs are set out below but other temporary reliefs may be introduced by the Government at a fiscal event. Further detail on current temporary reliefs is available at [www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief](http://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief). You should contact us for details on the latest availability of business rates reliefs and advice on whether you may qualify.

## Small Business Rates Relief

If a ratepayer's sole or main property has a rateable value which does not exceed a set threshold, the ratepayer may receive a percentage reduction in their rates bill for the property of up to a maximum of 100%. The level of reduction will depend on the rateable value of the property. For example eligible properties with a rateable value below a specified lower threshold will receive 100% relief, while eligible properties above the lower threshold and below a specified upper threshold may receive partial relief. The relevant thresholds for relief are set by the Government by order and can be obtained from our website or [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates).

Generally, these percentage reductions (reliefs) are only available to ratepayers who occupy either:

- (a) one property, or
- (b) one main property and other additional properties providing those additional properties each have a rateable value which does not exceed the limit set by order.

The aggregate rateable value of all the properties mentioned in (b), must also not exceed an amount set by order. For those businesses that take on an additional property which would normally have meant the loss of small business rate relief, they will be allowed to keep that relief for a fixed additional period. Full details on the relevant limits in relation to second properties and the current period for which a ratepayer may continue to receive relief after taking on an additional property can be obtained from our website or [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates).

Certain changes in circumstances will need to be notified to us by the ratepayer who is in receipt of relief (other changes will be picked up by the local authority). The changes which should be notified are:

- (a) the property falling vacant,
- (b) the ratepayer taking up occupation of an additional property, or
- (c) an increase in the rateable value of a property occupied by the ratepayer in an area other than the area of the local authority which granted the relief.

## **Charity and Community Amateur Sports Club Relief**

Charities and registered Community Amateur Sports Clubs are entitled to 80% relief where the property is occupied by the charity or the club and is wholly or mainly used for the charitable purposes of the charity (or of that and other charities), or for the purposes of the club (or of that and other clubs).

Durham County Council has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. Full details can be obtained from our website.

## **Transitional Rate Relief**

At a revaluation, some ratepayers will see reductions or no change in their bill whereas some ratepayers will see increases.

Transitional relief schemes are introduced at each revaluation to help those facing increases. Transitional relief is applied automatically to bills. Further information about transitional arrangements may be obtained from the local authority or at [www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates](http://www.gov.uk/introduction-to-business-rates).

## **Local Discounts and Hardship Relief**

Durham County Council has a general power to grant discretionary local discounts and to give hardship relief in specific circumstances. Full details can be obtained from our website.

## **Rate Relief for Businesses in Rural Areas**

Certain types of properties in a rural settlement with a population below 3,000 may be entitled to relief. The property must be the only general store, the only post office or a food shop and have a rateable value of less than £8,500, or the only public house or the only petrol station and have a rateable value of less than £12,500. The property has to be occupied. An eligible ratepayer is entitled to relief at 50% of the full charge whilst the local authority also has discretion to give further relief on the remaining bill. The 2016 Autumn Statement confirmed the doubling of rural rate relief from 50% to 100% from 1 April 2017. Local authorities are expected to use their local discount powers to grant 100% rural rate relief to eligible ratepayers from 1 April 2017.

## **Unoccupied Property Rating**

Business rates are generally payable in respect of unoccupied non-domestic property. However, they are generally not payable for the first three months that a property is empty. This is extended to six months in the case of certain industrial premises, whilst certain other properties such as vacant listed buildings are not liable for business rates until they are reoccupied. Full details on exemptions can be obtained from our website or from gov.uk at [www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief](http://www.gov.uk/apply-for-business-rate-relief).

## Subsidy Control

The new UK subsidy control regime commenced from 4th January 2023. The new regime enables public authorities, including devolved administrations and local authorities, to deliver subsidies that are tailored for local needs. Public authorities giving subsidies must comply with the UK's international subsidy control commitments.

The subsidy control legislation provides the framework for a new, UK-wide subsidy control regime. Further information about subsidy control can be found on the gov.uk website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/subsidy-control-regime>.

## Rating Advisers

Ratepayers do not have to be represented in discussions about the rateable value of their property or their rates bill. However, ratepayers who do wish to be represented should be aware that members of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS - website [www.rics.org](http://www.rics.org)) and the Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation (IRRV - website [www.irrv.org.uk](http://www.irrv.org.uk)) are qualified and are regulated by rules of professional conduct designed to protect the public from misconduct. Before you employ a rating adviser or company you should check that they have the necessary knowledge and expertise, as well as appropriate indemnity insurance. Take great care and, if necessary, seek further advice before entering into any contract.

## Information Supplied with Demand Notices

Information relating to the relevant and previous financial years in regard to the gross expenditure of Durham County Council is available at [www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates](http://www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates). A hard copy is available on request by writing to the council or call us on 03000 268997.

## Contact us

Please contact our Business Rates Team with any queries on **03000 268 997**.

**Opening times:** Monday to Thursday 8.30am-5.00pm, Friday 8.30am-4.30pm.

You can also access our services online [www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates](http://www.durham.gov.uk/businessrates)

**Email:** [businessrates@durham.gov.uk](mailto:businessrates@durham.gov.uk) quoting your account number.

**By Post:** Durham County Council, Revenues and Benefits, PO Box 238, Stanley, County Durham, DH8 1FP.

### Where to go for independent advice

If you are having problems paying your Business Rates bill and /or you have other debts, contact **Citizens Advice County Durham** on **0300 330 9027**.

Or via their website [www.citizensadvicecd.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicecd.org.uk)

Or alternatively, **Business Debt line** who can be contacted on: Freephone **0800 197 6026**.

Or via their website at [www.businessdebtline.org](http://www.businessdebtline.org)

If you would like to receive occasional emails (no more than one a month), notifying you of sponsorship and advertising opportunities with the council, please send an email to [advertising@durham.gov.uk](mailto:advertising@durham.gov.uk) and include SUBSCRIBE in the subject line.

You can also follow us on LinkedIn at: [www.linkedin.com/company/durham-county-council](http://www.linkedin.com/company/durham-county-council).

**Business Durham** is the first point of contact for businesses operating in County Durham. The experienced team offers advice and guidance to support business growth and development while providing an easy route to the Council services that they may need. Business Durham has the knowledge to ensure businesses are connected to the right funding, advice, and networks they need to grow and thrive. The Business Durham team can help businesses find the business premises they need managing properties across the County ranging from industrial units, and office space to laboratories and clean rooms. To find out more about the support available from Business Durham visit [www.businessdurham.co.uk](http://www.businessdurham.co.uk) or follow them on LinkedIn [Business Durham](#).

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**Telephone: 03000 260 000**

**Email: [help@durham.gov.uk](mailto:help@durham.gov.uk)**

This leaflet forms part of the council tax and non-domestic rate bills for 2023/24